



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

SEP 4 2003

Dear Colleague:

Every year in this country, approximately

- 114,000 people are hospitalized because of influenza;
- 36,000 people die due to influenza and its complications;
- 60,000 cases of invasive pneumococcal disease occur; and
- Half of all deaths from invasive pneumococcal disease occur in people 65 years old or older.

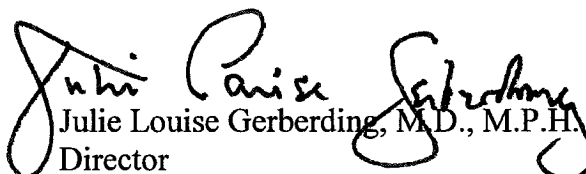
Timely immunization can help us significantly reduce the impact of influenza and pneumococcal disease. To assist you in the coming months, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is providing you with the kit, "Immunize Now." This kit contains new patient education materials on influenza and pneumococcal immunization, along with resources to help practices like yours vaccinate patients quickly and effectively.

Further, as the "What's New" card illustrates, there are many new developments when it comes to influenza and pneumococcal vaccination. For example, Medicare has nearly doubled the reimbursement rates for administering both vaccines. In addition, an annual influenza vaccination is now recommended for all people 50 years of age and older.

CDC urges you to use every opportunity to immunize your patients against influenza and pneumococcal disease, especially those who are 65 years of age or older and those with chronic health problems such as diabetes, asthma, and heart conditions. Overall, African Americans and Hispanics are of particular concern because they are immunized at disproportionately lower rates than the general population.

I hope you find this kit useful in increasing immunization rates among your patients, and I thank you for your efforts to improve our nation's health.

Sincerely,


Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director